

ISLAM

Love for God consists of humility

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Henry de Castro, a senior French officer posted to Algeria during the days of the French occupation, was once leading a contingent of thirty Arab horsemen through the desert when he was informed by his men that the time had come for the afternoon prayer. Without further ado, they dismounted, and, without asking his permission, they gave the call to prayer, lined up in rows and began to pray. De Castro, affronted at what he considered arrogant and undisciplined behaviour on their part, nevertheless remained silent.

Bringing his horse to a standstill, he observed his men at their devotions. Somehow these orderly rows of men engaged in earnest prayer made a deep impression upon him.

Although he had at first felt that his men were guilty of insubordination, he became more and more touched by the humility with which they prostrated themselves before their Maker. He realized that it was certainly not pride which had made them act as they had. Later, when the prayer was over, he questioned them about it and listened attentively to everything they had to say.

When he went back home, he began to make a study of Islam, first of all reading a French translation of the Quran, then traveling extensively in Arab countries to observe the Islamic way of life.

His impressions of Islam became more and more profound and, eventually, he came within the fold. He later wrote a book in French on how he had come to accept Islam. This was translated into Arabic by the famous Egyptian writer, FathiZaghlul, and was published under the title of Al-Islam: Khawaterwa-Sawaneh. This recounts how it was the sight of God's servants bowing before Him which had awakened his true nature and inspired in him a feeling of submission to God.